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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE(HOH/STINCHCOMB); NSC FOR BRAUN

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA POLITICAL UPDATE - OCTOBER 29, 2007

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

RS Government Rejects OHR Measures

11. (U) The RS government met before today's session of the RS National Assembly Speaker (RSNA) and concluded that the High Representative's measures are anti-Dayton and endorsed PM Milorad Dodik's view that they must be overturned. The RS government decision was passed to the RSNA as the basis for parliamentary action.

RSNA Special Session

12. (SBU) Speaker Igor Radojicic announced that the RSNA would meet in special session at 1700 local time today. Over the weekend RSNA delegates stated that the agenda would include discussion of the High Representative's measures and a PDP proposal to eliminate the Bonn Powers. We expect the session, underway as this is being transmitted, to last several hours.

UK Ambassador Meets Dodik

13. (C) British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft met with PM Dodik today in Banja Luka. Dodik confirmed that the SNSD decision to withdraw its members from the Council of Ministers will be postponed until Thursday in order to give the PIC an opportunity to address RS opposition to the Lajcak measures. Rycroft reports that Dodik was firm in his position that either the High Representative withdraw or substantially alter his measures or the RSNA position would be that the Bonn Powers should be revoked and OHR closed. Dodik was clear that, in any event, he and his colleagues would continue to oppose any measures Lajcak might take in the future. Interestingly, Rycroft reported that, while Dodik opposed the continued presence of OHR, he endorsed the continuation of EUFOR, which he described as doing useful work in Bosnia.

Banja Luka Demonstration

14. (U) Eyewitnesses and media outlets report that approximately 5,000 protesters took part in the Banja Luka demonstration, far fewer than the 40-50,000 initially predicted by organizers SPONA. In addition to Milorad Dodik,

members of all RS-based parties joined and addressed the demonstration including SDS, PDP, Serb Radical Party, Petar Djokic (SP), and Marko Pavic (DNS, Mayor of Prijedor). Most of the protesters appeared to be pensioners and students. Interestingly, eyewitnesses report that several protesters in Banja Luka carried portraits of Vladimir Putin.

Dodik Remarks

¶5. (U) In his remarks to protesters, Milorad Dodik repeated demands that the High Representative must either withdraw or amend the announced measures. He characterized the measures as "unneeded" and "deceptions." Dodik stated that OHR legal analysis of the Lajcak measures, demonstrating they do not adversely target Serb interests, was insufficient. He added that "OHR claims to cover everything with an interpretation, but we believe that assurances safeguarding our interests are needed. OHR legal analysis is problematic and it does not give any guarantees for the future." Dodik also repeated past statements that the RS is a "permanent category" and "there is no BiH without the RS."

Other RS Protests

¶6. (SBU) Our contacts throughout the RS report small and mostly uneventful protests:

Prijedor: The largest demonstration outside of Banja Luka took place in Prijedor with between 1,000 and 2,000 protesters gathered in front of the municipal building. The protest lasted for 30 minutes with no incidents. Many buses were seen bringing people from surrounding areas of Prijedor municipality.

Zvornik: Some 500 protesters gathered peacefully for about 30 minutes. There were a large number of special police present.

Bratunac: Approximately 100-150 people gathered for an hour, including the radical Ravnogorski Cetnicki Pokret. Local President of War Veterans addressed the crowd stating "we will not wage war against our neighbors because of international community decisions, but if necessary, we are ready to defend the RS with our blood."

Bijeljina: Several hundred people gathered at the main square of with most bused from rural areas of Bijeljina municipality. The event was poorly organized, began with a short religious ceremony and the lighting of candles for veterans and concluded with an media interview by Veljo Stevanovic, head of the local Serb Refugee Association.

Demonstrations numbering approximately 100 persons also took place in Pale, Trebinje, Foca and Nevesinje.

Ambassador Calls President Radmanovic

¶7. (C) The Ambassador this morning called Bosnian-Serb member of Tri-Presidency Nebojsa Radmanovic to again urge that the RSNA take no provocative action during today's session. The Ambassador said the meeting between OHR legal experts and RS officials and the Mostar conference had improved the situation and presented a way for the RS to back away from its challenge to the international community. The Ambassador stressed that RS leadership had to understand that the High Representative's decisions would not be withdrawn or amended. Radmanovic agreed that the two weekend meetings had been helpful, and said he would work to ensure that the RSNA produced "normal conclusions" that would provide a way out of the crisis. Radmanovic said he had also pushed Dodik to withdraw SNSD support for the planned protests, which should serve to "keep many people off the streets."

RSNA Speaker Radojicic

18. (C) The Ambassador also called RSNA Speaker and Acting RS President Igor Radojicic and delivered a similar message. Radojicic blamed OHR for failing to act as partner in the process, and called for legal safeguards to ensure that the High Representative's decisions were not abused in the future. Radojicic told the Ambassador that OHR had pledged to provide the RS government with additional legal explanations following the weekend meeting, and these would determine the tone and conclusions of the RSNA session. Radojicic said he hoped to avoid a return to direct confrontation, but OHR expect the RSNA to "admit OHR was right all along, and we were completely wrong." The Ambassador said legal discussions could provide the basis for mutual understanding; he stressed, however, that the international community would not support amending the measures.

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